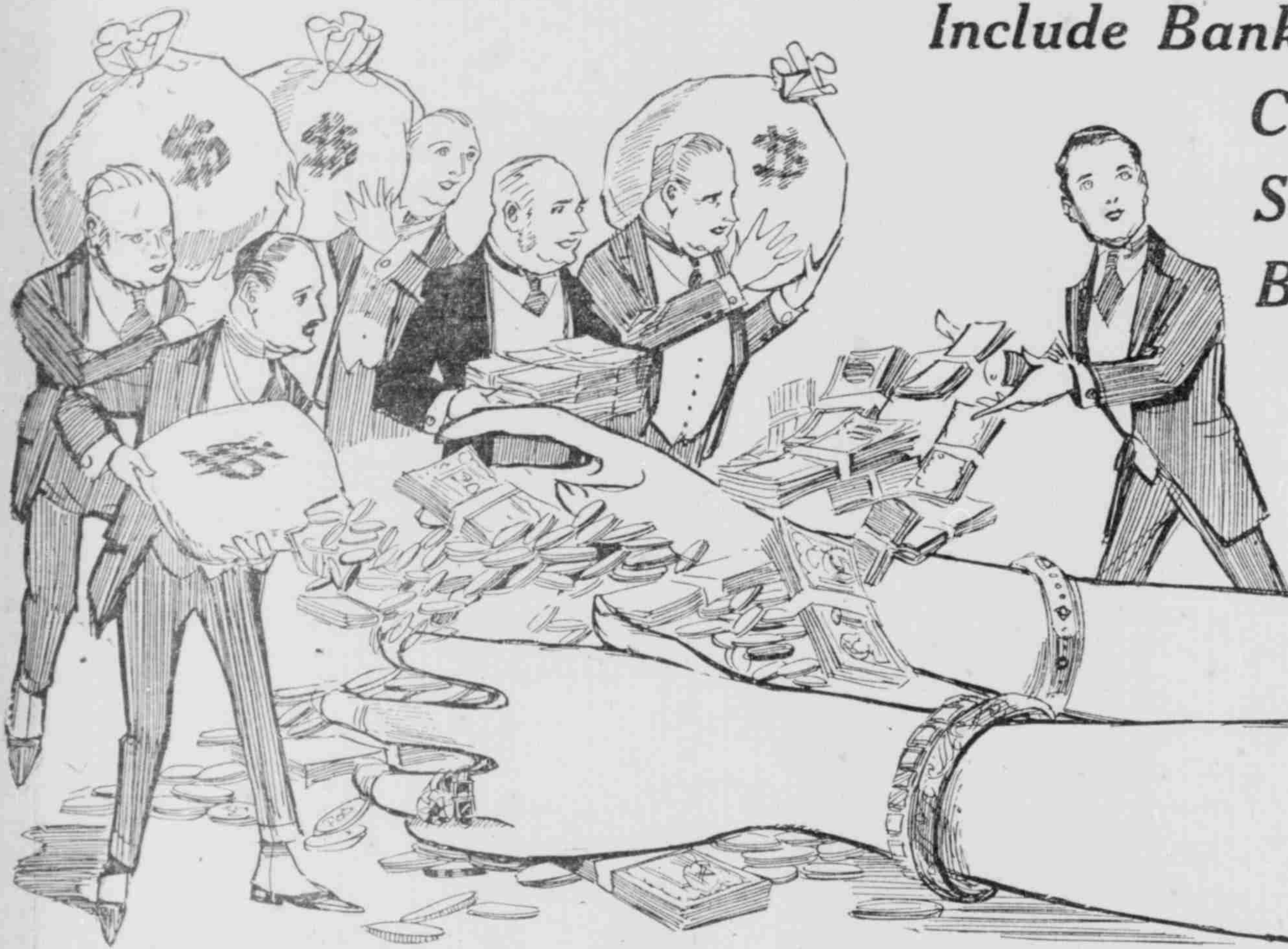


Easy-Money Methods of a "Petticoated Ponzi"

And the Tragic Climax to the Frenzied Career of
Almeda Everts, Whose Easy-Money Victims
Include Bankers, the
Clergy and Even
Some Very Shrewd
Business Men.



By Robert E. Vale

A WOMAN'S FORM poised for a flash on the edge of a ferryboat, and almost without a sound the waves closed over one who had gone to eternity.

A trail of high finance swings through many states and totals more than \$300,000.

Scores of men and women bled of their savings and only an echoing laugh to answer their tears or their curses.

Other men who trusted and who loved awake to find they are dupes.

And, in Moyamensing prison there sits Almeda Everts—the woman. And there she will sit, her business men—clergymen—doctor—victims assert, for many long days to come, if they have their way. For, even though many of them refuse to prosecute, to face the decision that follows the admission by a man that a woman duped him, they want the satisfaction for the amounts ranging from \$8000 to \$15,000 each from which they were separated of knowing that she is in durandura vile. So, mysteriously, petty little things are charged against her from unsuspected sources as that, as fast as clever lawyers dispose of one allegation, another arises to keep fast locked the bars of her prison.

Her inspiration was Cassie Chadwick; the methods of that high priestess of visionary wealth were followed by Almeda Everts. Side by side, in a strange parallel, their lives are linked; fifteen years apart.

Almeda Everts was not yet 20 years old, the wife of a mechanic, when she was stirred by the witchery of wealth shown by Cassie Chadwick. How, on the strength of a mythical fortune, Mrs. Chadwick had persuaded bankers to give her millions; how she rode in gay carriages; how she dashed here and there in the automobiles of those days; how jewels and luxuries were hers, aroused the strange spirit of Almeda Everts.

And how this girl built her own fantastic story of rich estates and how she lured and betrayed men of wealth and how, like Cassie Chadwick, she finally came to a prison cell as an exciting as the life story of Almeda's predecessor—with the added tragedy of the suicide of the wife of Robert Mountford, one of the Everts victims.

Her Husband's Tribute

"A remarkable woman, an astonishing woman," reflected William V. Chambers, her first husband, as he smoked his pipe in the parlor of his home up in Frankford, in the same neighborhood that Almeda spent her childhood days. "I can understand the feelings of that New Jersey man who, after identifying her in prison, said: 'New let me go away. If she speaks to me I can't help myself; I will have to go her bail.' If ever there was a woman with hypnotic power it is Almeda Everts. In her presence you are helpless—man or woman. She is not handsome, she never was. As a girl she was passably good-looking. But, my friend, she has a personality such as I have never seen in any other woman. Let her talk and you believe everything she says. Out of her influence you wonder what swayed you to make a fool of yourself."

"I know when it started. It was about the time of the Cassie Chadwick exposure. She talked about women, perhaps she studied every action of that noted swindler. At any rate her whole nature seemed to change in a flash. She began to hire expensive rigs and drive up and down the streets. She bought expensive



Charles Ponzi Fleeced Credulous Investors
Out of Millions Within Twelve Months.



Cassie Chadwick Collected a Cool Million
from Otherwise Astute Business Men.



Almeda Everts, the Petticoated Ponzi,
Gathered in \$300,000 Before Her Arrest.

THE PARALLEL

ALMEDA EVERTS

Uneducated. Former house servant. Said to have taken \$300,000 from her victims. Posed as heiress to vast fortune. Called a hypnotist. Unusual talker. Fond of carriages and automobiles. Not handsome. Good dresser. Owned fine bungalow and kept city apartment. Sought business men as victims. Daring and cool. Arrested; in prison.

CASSIE CHADWICK

Uneducated. Once a servant. Got more than \$1,000,000 from her dupes. Posed as heiress to vast fortune. Admitted she studied hypnotism. Convincing talker. Used carriages and automobiles. Not handsome. Good dresser. Lived in magnificent home. Had country place. Bankers and business men her victims. Daring and cool. Died in prison.

things. In one day she spent more money than I could earn in a week. I begged her to end the extravagance. She laughed and replied: "Money is the easiest thing to get in the world." "Then we broke. I went my way. She went hers. More than fifteen years have gone since then and I can speak dispassionately, but she was a remarkable woman and worthy of better than a prison. Somehow I do not blame her, not a bit. And still I know that she is accused of swindling scores."

Those who have known and talked with Almeda, now 38 years old, will tell you the same thing. Even her victims praise her ability, her kindness, her sympathy, her mentality. Yet she was reared among scenes of drunkenness and did not go to school five years in all her life. As a child she was beaten and frail and anemic, was "bound out" and sent to the country.

Today she talks learnedly on many subjects. Her English is faultless, her voice musical and well modulated. Her eyes are frank, happy, trustful. No society woman dresses in better taste. No political leader is more convincing. No clergyman more earnest. But—

When Everett Marshall and his wife of New-

field faced the woman in prison and pointed her out as having taken \$2300 of their savings, she surveyed them through a gold monocle as if entertained; then with a merry laugh, she turned to the captain of detectives and confessed sweetly: "Certainly I took their money, blew it away like bubbles. They believed what I said."

Robert Mountford, of Haddon Heights, N. J., was helpless before this weird woman. He gave her \$5000. He induced his mother to give her \$15,000. Although he was married he became separated from his wife and, according to the court records, committed bigamy by marrying the Everts woman. A few weeks later a disheartened woman leaped from a ferryboat in the Dela-

ware river. The police say she was Mrs. Mountford. When Almeda was arrested in her luxurious apartments on North Broad street, Philadelphia, she laughed and asked the police to notify "Bob" Mountford. They explained to him the long string of charges against her. He was amazed.

"Why, she swindled me and my mother!" he cried. Then he preferred additional charges against her. This warrant was served on Almeda. She smiled ever so sweetly. "Bob will help me out," she reiterated. Away from her voice, away from her eyes, away from her charm Mountford was like iron. But he went to the prison. He talked with her. Then he came out, withdrew his charge and set out to aid the woman he knew had duped him. Now Mountford has disappeared. He is dominated by Almeda.

So are other victims, or at least they refuse to prosecute. Some, however, are determined to keep the remarkable woman in jail for a long time. Five Kensington mill owners have told the detectives that they have been fleeced. The amounts range from \$8000 to \$15,000 each. Clergymen, doctors, business men, rich women who sought social fame, and even taxicab com-

panies are listed as victims. How did she do it? Just as Cassie Chadwick did it she did it. There was one difference. This woman high financier of later days operated in different cities, Mrs. Chadwick in one. Her stock in trade was a mythical Harjes estate. She was "one of the heirs." Her share amounted to "hundreds of thousands of dollars." Yes, it was the Morgan-Harjes financial house of Paris that held her money. Meanwhile she was receiving wonderful tips from the Morgan bank in New York and her winnings on the stock market ran into vast sums. Of course she would let her friends in on the deals and they would soon be wealthy. But—she needed a few thousands for pressing needs. Could they accommodate her? So the stream of gold came rolling to the woman who but a few years ago was a house servant, half-starved.

Victims who came to her handsome bungalow in New Jersey one day saw a check on the Irving Bank of New York for \$100,000. It was signed "J. P. Morgan." Almeda tossed it into a corner of the desk: "The local bank does not have funds to cash it; I will have to wait a few days to get the money."

She was visiting at the home of one who had too much faith in her. She begged permission to use the telephone. They heard her talk with her broker.

"So that stock deal only netted me \$35,000?" they heard her cry, petulantly. "I was sure it would reach \$50,000. Oh, well, just credit it to my account."

Later they agreed that Almeda had her finger holding down the receiver. But at the time it was impressive.

\$5000 a Year on Taxis!

It is the gospel truth that she spent \$5000 a year on taxicabs. It was one of her frenzied hobbies. At Atlantic City she had a high-salaried chauffeur to run her cars. Like Cassie Chadwick, she found automobiles impressive. Equally convincing was her tale that she was a niece of the late John G. Johnson, a millionaire Philadelphia lawyer.

Now and then she would exhibit a letter from a firm of Washington lawyers telling how swiftly the Harjes estate was being closed up. That helped a whole lot. But the lure of the tips on the stock market was the strongest. There is a story that sixteen business men and rich farmers in southern New Jersey formed a pool and placed sums ranging from \$1000 to \$5000 in her hands, hoping to profit. They never heard from the pool.

Almeda Everts was one of the few persons successful in "skinning" Atlantic City folk. She paraded her estate and her stock tips before the eyes of well-to-do men and women. Some say she got more than \$10,000 in a very short season. She fled when warrants were issued.

She went to the Maine summer resorts. Just about the time she was getting her stage set she was arrested in Portland on a charge made by a victim from Pittsburgh, Pa. She was sent to prison for nearly a year and a half. It is said that almost every hour of her time in prison was spent in reading, studying and planning. And when she came out she began to organize finance and faith on a large scale.

Almeda is confident that she will escape sentence in the present prosecution. Only the other day she sent out this warning:

"Some persons will get me out of this; they've got to."

Which may mean a great deal—for she is a remarkable woman.

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